

A dramatic religious painting, likely a Baroque work, depicting a group of people in prayer. The figures are shown from the chest up, looking upwards with expressions of awe and devotion. Their hands are clasped in prayer. The background is dark, with several vertical, flame-like shapes hanging down, suggesting a divine presence or a miraculous event. The lighting is focused on the faces and hands, creating a strong contrast with the dark background.

# Does the Bible have Errors?

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# Outline

1. The doctrine of Biblical inerrancy
2. Common alternative views
3. How does this controversy play out in Christian communities?



# What do we mean by “Inerrancy”?

- “The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts properly interpreted does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.”  
– Wayne Grudem

- **The Bible doesn’t say “Oops.”**

“The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure, silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times” (Ps. 12:6)

“Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him” (Prov. 30:5)

# Jesus and Inerrancy in the Old Testament

- Matthew 22:9 But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because **you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.**
- John 10: <sup>33</sup> The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? <sup>35</sup> If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—**and Scripture cannot be broken** —<sup>36</sup> do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

# **The doctrine of inspiration**

- 2 Tim 3: <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

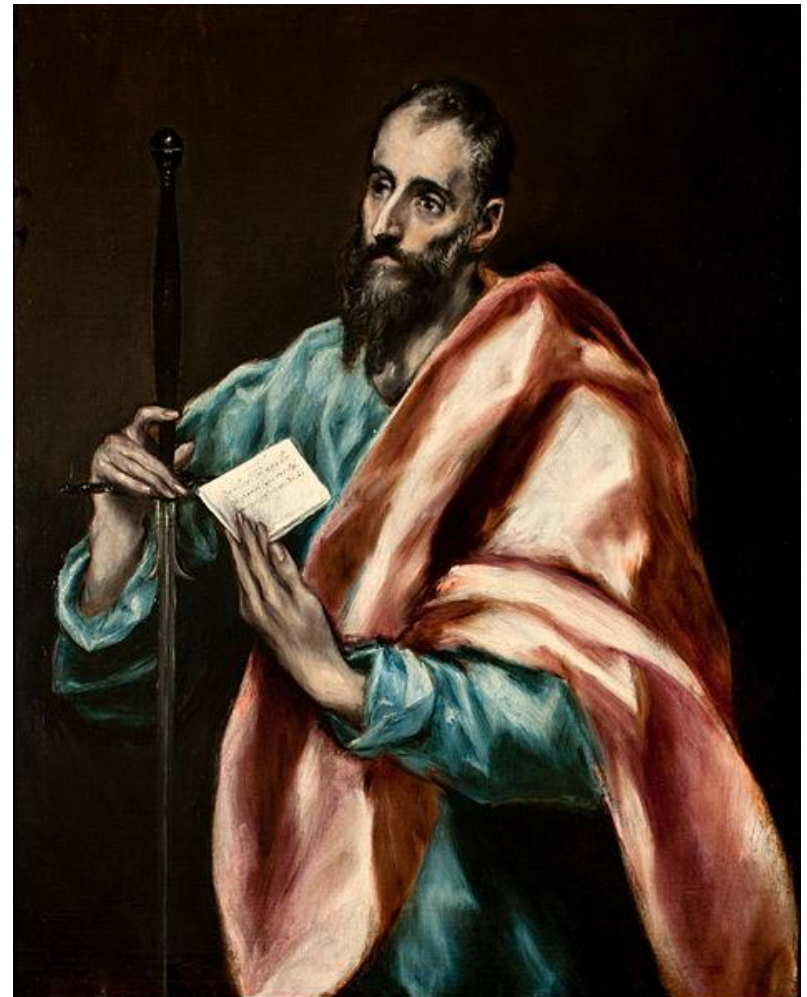


# How does authorship work?

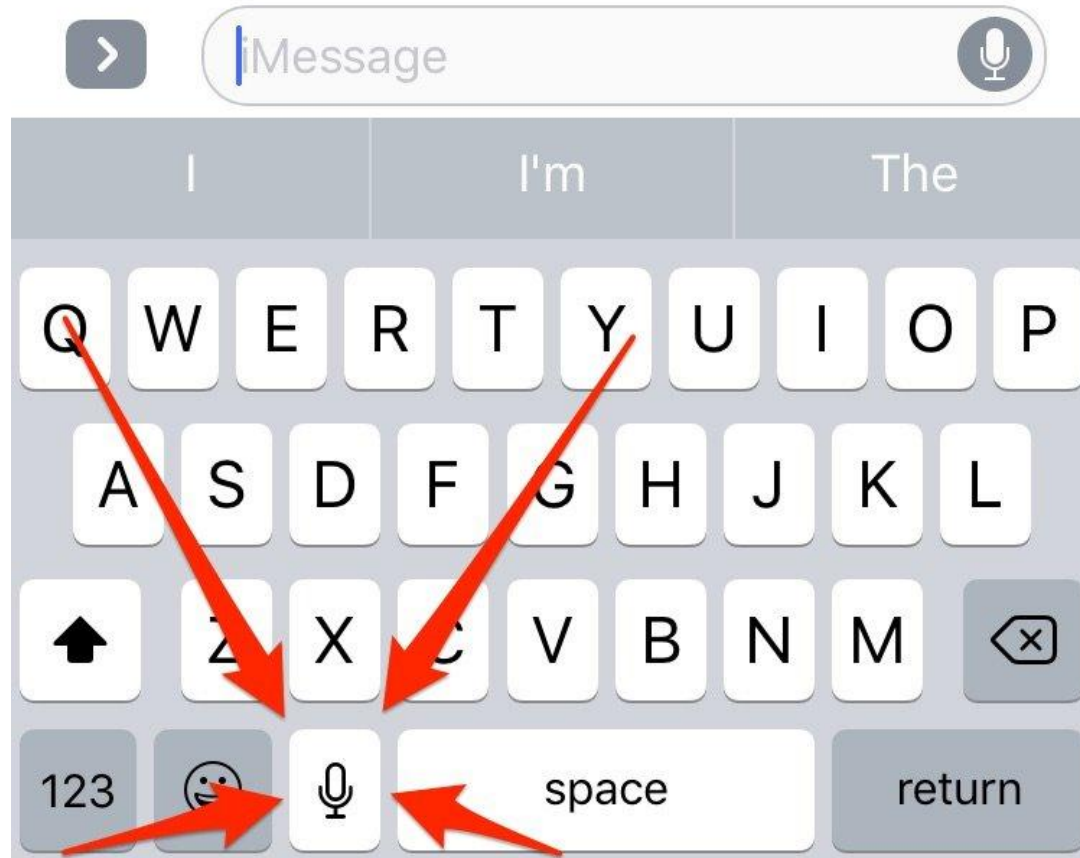
- Human author
- Divine author

1 Pet 1:21

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.



# How is the human author of Scripture involved?



# What about the human author?

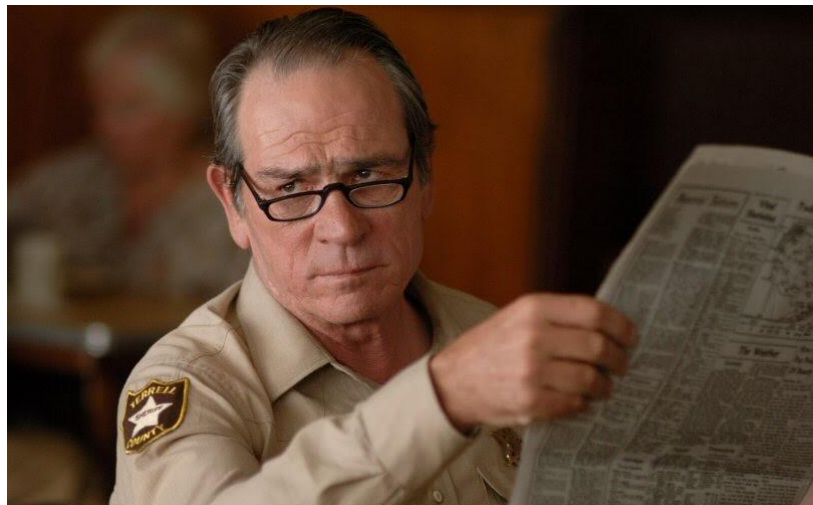
- Human authors write in their own voice.
  - It's not dictation!
  - God preserves Scripture from human error.





# Inerrancy does allow for...

- Ordinary language of everyday speech
  - Rounded numbers
  - Loose quotations
  - Unusual or uncommon grammatical constructions



# **Don't impose modern definitions of accuracy or historicity on the Bible**



# Example: Mustard Seed & Science

- Matthew 13: <sup>31</sup> He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.<sup>32</sup> It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”
- “Well, actually, the mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds!”



# Example: Gospel Chronology

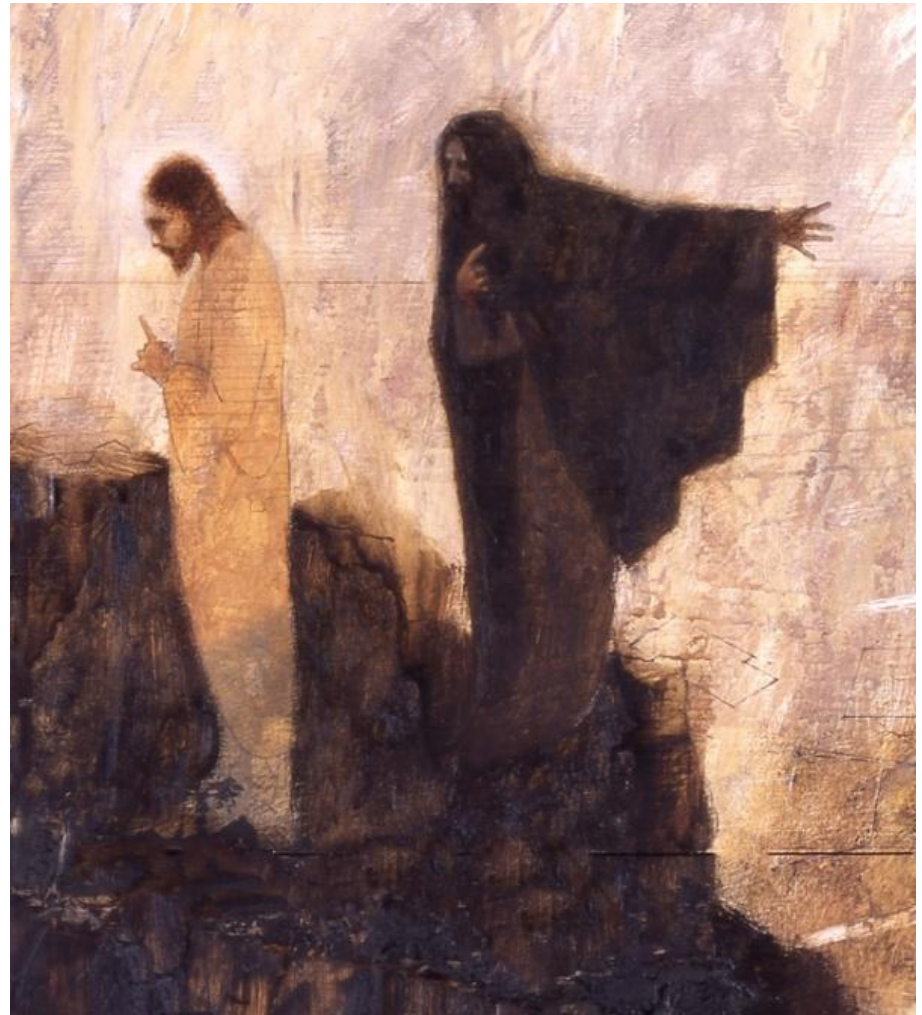
Do they  
all tell the  
same  
story?





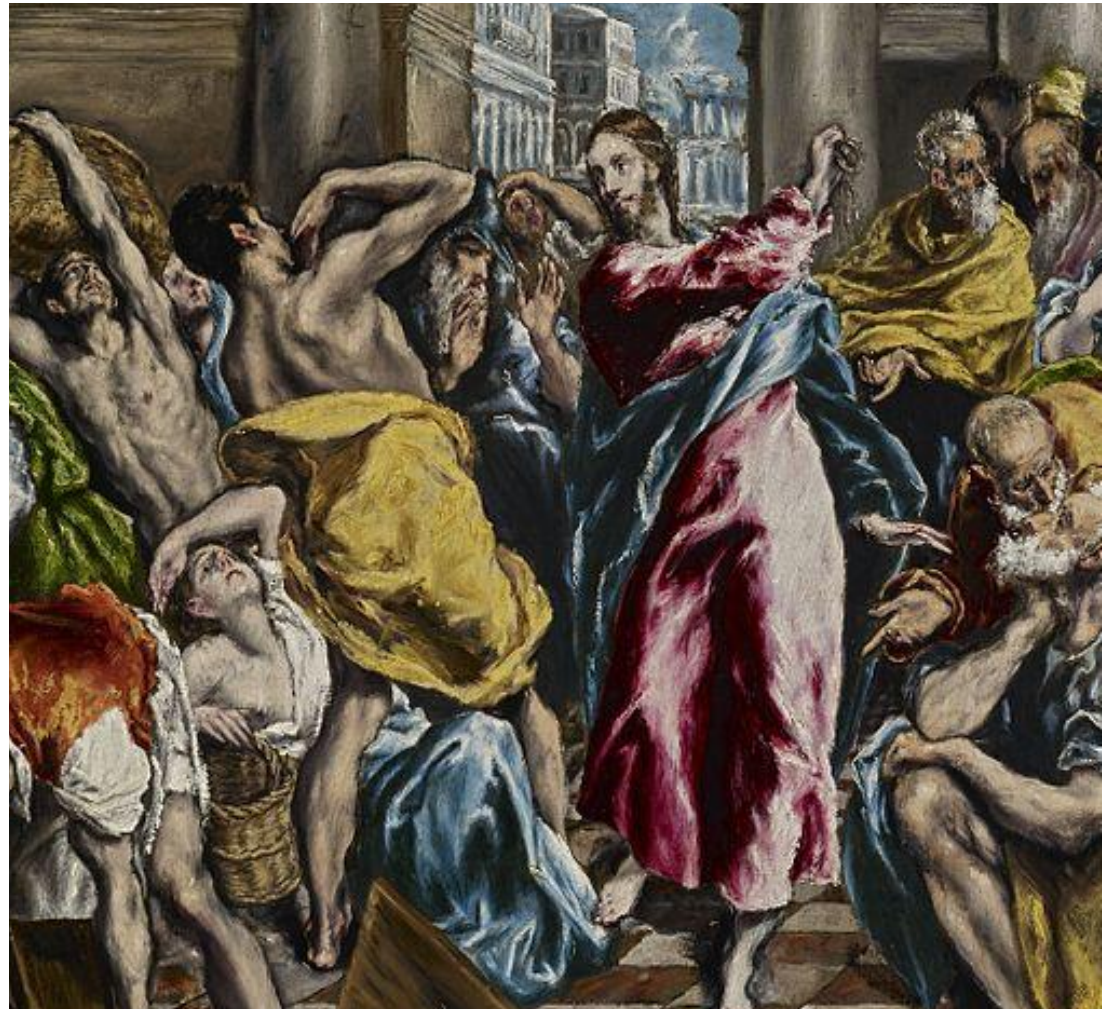
# Example: Gospel Chronology

- Christ's temptations:
  - Matthew:
    - Stones
    - Temple
    - Worship
  - Luke
    - Stones
    - Worship
    - Temple



# Example: Gospel Chronology

- Jesus cleanses the temple.  
When does this happen?





**That seems...misleading...**



# Photo vs. Portrait



**What about copy errors?**

# Only the *autographa* are inerrant

 The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, The Great Isaiah Scroll

[Terms of use](#) X



Col IV - Is. 3:24-5:14

Col III - Is. 2:25-3:24

Col II - Is. 1:26-2:21

Col I - Is. 1:1-2:5

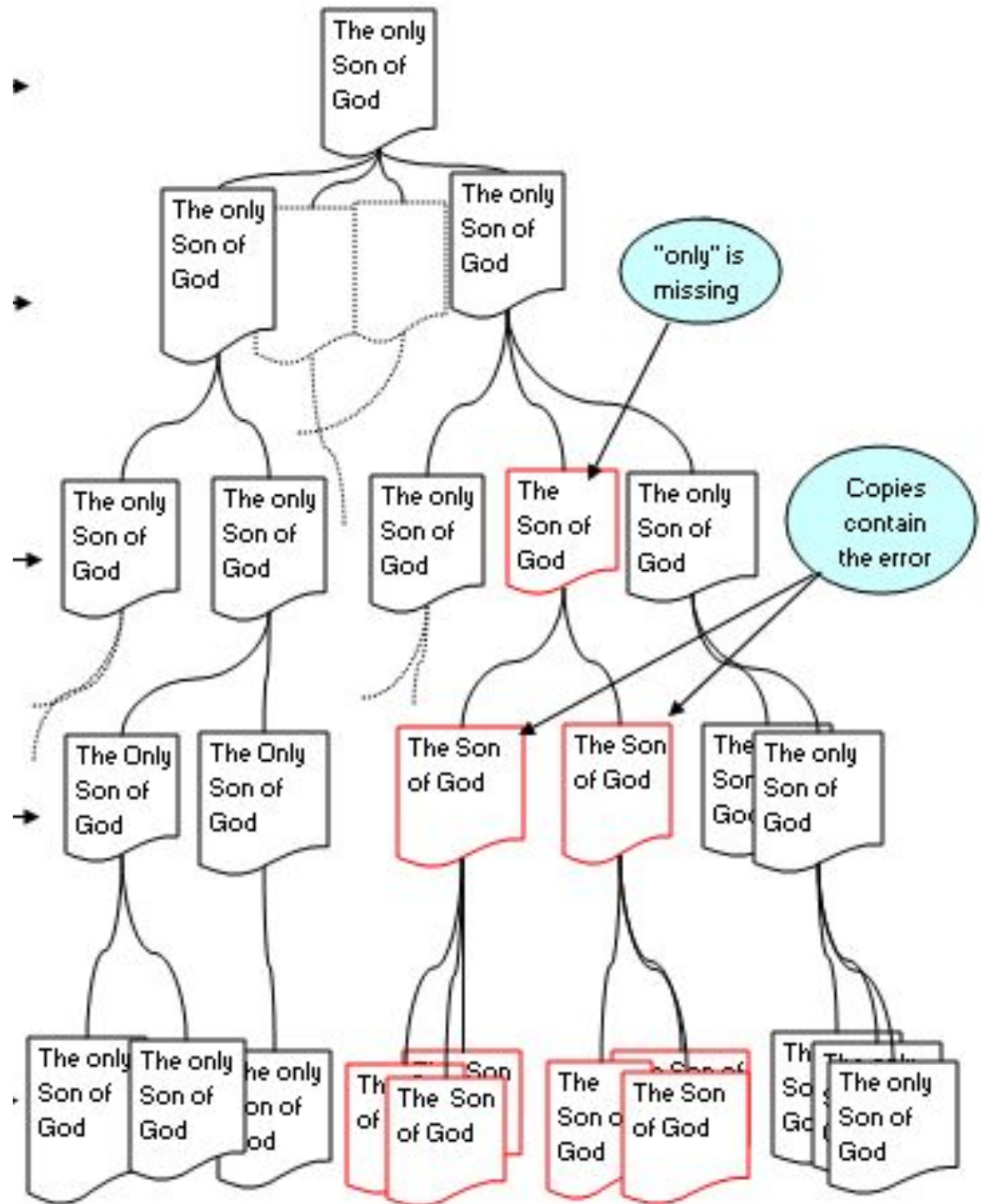


British Library,  
London

19

**So...do we  
have the  
autographa  
?**

(Wait, what counts  
as the autographa  
if a Biblical author  
is cobbling  
together sources?)





# How do we know the right books are in the Bible?

- We need an inerrant list (Canon) of inerrant books, right?
- (Email me!)



# Alternative views

# Alternative view: Bible is “Infallible”

- “Infallible” means this: The Bible is authoritative in telling us the truth we need for faith and practice. It’s not a book of history or science.
- What do you think of this?
- **How does Jesus treat the Old Testament?**
- Jesus tells disciples that you are “slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” (Luke 24:25)



# **Alternative view: “Accommodation”**

- “Biblical writers may have ‘accommodated’ their messages in minor details to the false ideas current in their day.”
  - Ancient cosmology
  - 1<sup>st</sup> century belief in demons



## **ADAPTATION VIEW**

GOD ADAPTS TO FINITUDE

BIBLE USES ANALAGOUS LANGUAGE

BIBLE STORIES ARE FACTUAL

## **ACCOMMODATION VIEW**

GOD ACCOMMODATES TO ERROR

IT USES EQUIVOCAL LANGUAGE

SOME STORIES ARE NOT FACTUAL



How does this play out in  
Christian communities?



# Quiz: Which of these people believe in inerrancy?

## Person A:

The book of Jonah is intended to accurately record history, whale and all, and I believe it.

## Person B:

The author of the book of Jonah did not intend it to be taken literally. It's a word picture of Israel's lack of mercy toward others even when God has shown them mercy.

## Person C:

We now know that it's physically impossible to survive being ingested by a whale; ancient people didn't know that. Instead of insisting on this ancient story being literally true, let's look for its broader message and significance in our lives.



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The key:

Do you really care what the text is saying?

Are you willing to believe it and submit to it?

“Inerrancy” shouldn’t imply a pre-defined particular interpretation.



# Why is Inerrancy such a big deal?

- “If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself.”  
– Augustine of Hippo



 **Augustine of Hiphop**   
@hiphopaugustine

Following

Rome, Babel, Babylon, that city be faulty  
don't look back at Sodom or you gonna be  
salty

9:35 PM - 14 Jun 2018

76 Retweets 250 Likes



↻ 76



250



# Beware “Chastened epistemology”



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- Another minister said to Kevin DeYoung, “Do I think the virgin birth is essential to our creed as Christians? That’s not really mine to say, is it? As you say, it has been confessed for centuries, and thus, I need to take it seriously, to wrestle with how I understand it. For my part, I take the statement ‘All things are possible with God’ as more valuable to my faith than the statement ‘How can this be since I am a Virgin?’ I don’t claim that you need to accept my understanding, nor would I imagine that you would claim that I must necessarily accept your understanding.”



# **Where is inerrancy likely to be attacked in your faith community?**

- Alleged contradictions in Scripture
- Miracle claims like the virgin birth
- Questions of sexual ethics

# Take-away Message

- Inerrancy means “The Bible doesn’t say ‘Oops.’”
- Inerrancy isn’t really the issue; authority is the issue.
- Be cautious about accusing others of disbelieving in inerrancy just because they have a different Biblical interpretation than you.
- Don’t freak out; instead, dig into details when confronted with apparent inconsistencies in Scripture.

# Appendix



**Lockwood DeWitt**

@lockwooddewitt

Follow



How did the mansplainer get injured?

They said he fell down a manhole, but it was a well, actually.

4:03 PM - 26 Jan 2018

9,130 Retweets 28,937 Likes



# The reason for controversy

- “I don’t believe that the story of Jonah could literally happen because the whale thing is impossible, so let’s just reinterpret the story to be allegorical.”
- “I believe that the book of Jonah was intended to allegorical, so that’s how we should interpret it.”